by DOUG MOENCH and PAUL GULACY
BAT MAN
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GULACY
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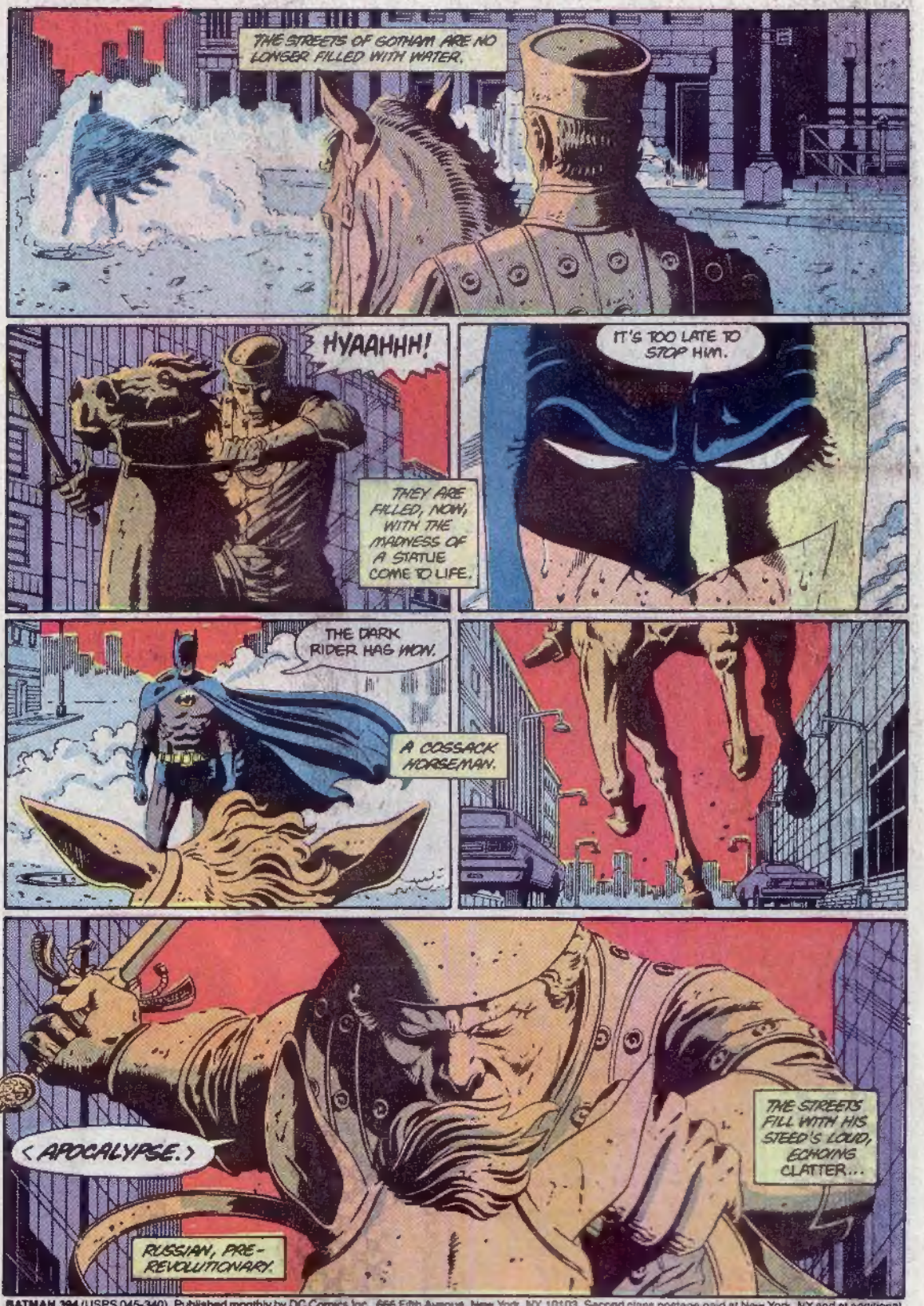
THE STREETS OF GOTHAM ARE NO LONGER FILLED WITH WATER.
HYAAHHH!
THEY ARE FILLED, NOW, WITH THE MADNESS OF A STATUE COME TO LIFE.
IT'S TOO LATE TO STOP HIM.
THE DARK RIDER HAS WON.
A COSSACK HORSEMAN.
<APOCALYPSE.>
RUSSIAN, PRE-REVOLUTIONARY.
THE STREETS FILL WITH HIS STEED'S LOUD, ECHOING CLATTER...

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AT THE HEART OF STONE
IT'S --TOO LATE!
AND THE STREETS FALL WITH DEATH.
DOUG MOENCH, WRITER
PAUL GULACY, ARTIST
JOHN COSTANZA, letterer
ADRIENNE ROY, colorist
LEN WEIN, EDITOR

THE HEAD BOUNCES ONCE BEFORE STRIKING THE MANHOLE COVER--
--WHICH BLOWS SKY-HIGH, HURLED THIRTY BLOCKS AWAY BY THE UNIMAGINABLE FORCE OF A RISING, BULGING, TOWERING CLOUD RELEASED FROM HELL--
--VAPORIZING FIVE-HUNDRED MILLION POUNDS OF FLESH AND TOPPLING SKYSCRAPERS LIKE DOMINOES AS NIGHT TURNS TO DAY AND--
:HIIIIHHH!
HEY, BRUCE-- BATMAN! WAKE UP!
THE STATUE, ROBIN-- IT MAY BE FILLED WITH PLUTONIUM!
I KNOW, CHAMP-- YOU ALREADY TOLD US, WHEN YOU GOT BACK FROM SWITZERLAND..
...AND COMMISSIONER GORDON JUST SPENT FORTY MINUTES HASSLING WITH THE NUCLEAR EMERGENCY SEARCH TEAM IN WEST VIRGINIA-- BEFORE HE FINALLY SQUEEZED A "YES" OUT OF THEM.
TIME TO GO PICK UP THAT SNOOTY COMRADE OF YOURS... AND I WONDER IF ALL THE CHICKS IN RUSSIA ARE SUCH COLD FISH.
SAY...YOU ALL RIGHT, BOSS?
I'D BETTER BE, ROBIN.
THIS IS NO TIME TO LOSE OUR HEADS.
GOTHAM'S WATERFRONT...
THE CIA MAN IN SWITZERLAND WAS A FOOL, CONVINCED EVEN TO THE MOMENT OF HIS DEATH THAT HE HAD ENDED MY TERROR...
...WHEN HE WAS ACTUALLY USED TO ADVANCE THE TERROR ONE STEP CLOSER TO ITS TARGET.

HURRY WITH THAT STATUE-- LOAD IT ONTO THE TRUCK!
AND THEN, DARK RIDER?
AS I'VE TOLD YOU-- A SINGLE CITY WILL SUFFICE.
THE LOSS OF GOTHAM WILL BRING AMERICA TO HER KNEES.
YES... NOW THE WATER IS PERFECT..
...AND A PITY SUCH A BATH MUST END...
A PITY IT CANNOT WASH AWAY EVERYTHING.
INCREDIBLE...

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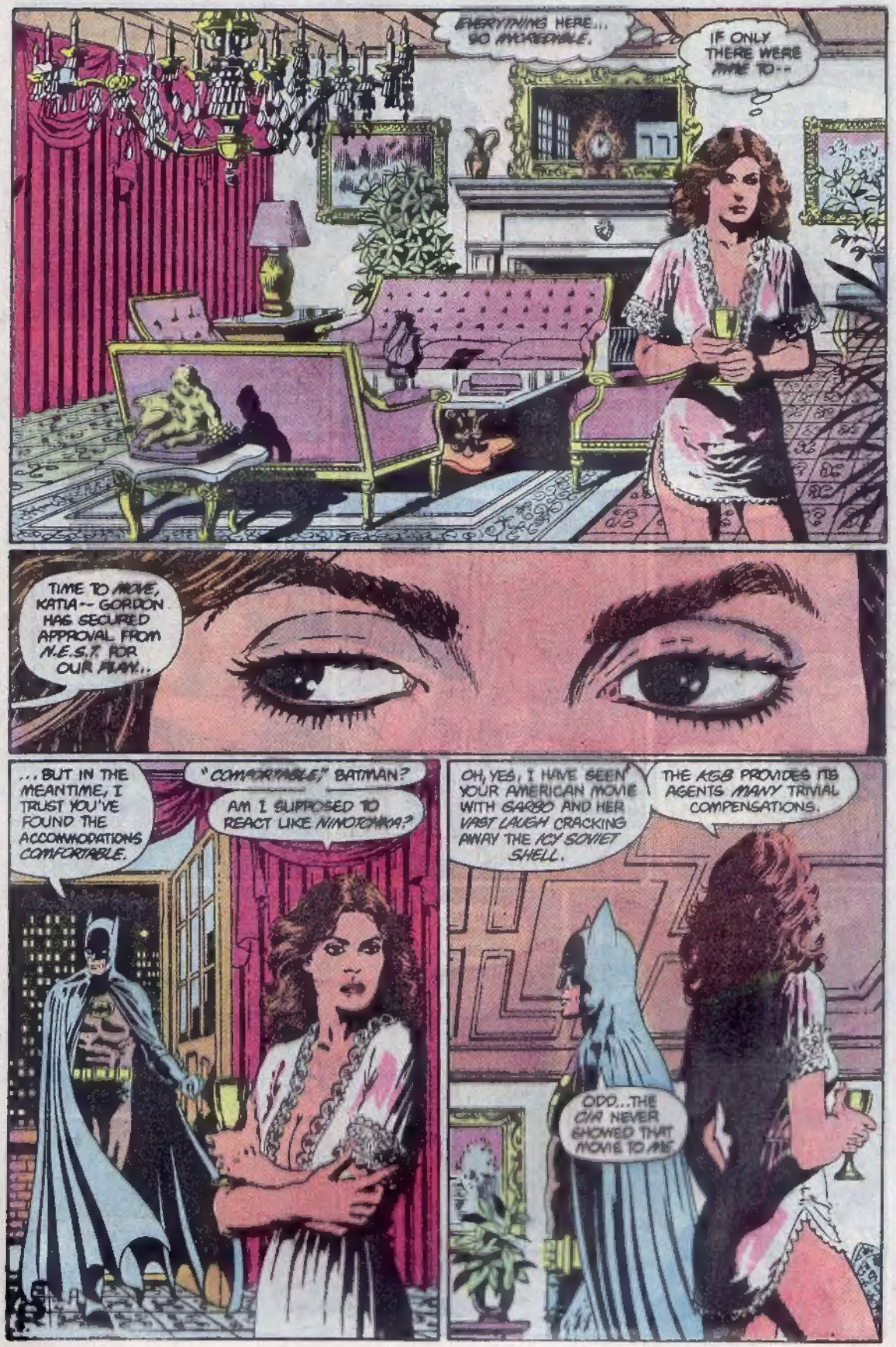
EVERYTHING HERE... SO INCREDIBLE.
IF ONLY THERE WERE MORE TO--
TIME TO MOVE, KATIA-- GORDON HAS SECURED APPROVAL FROM N.E.S.T. FOR OUR PLAN..
...BUT IN THE MEANTIME, I TRUST YOU'VE FOUND THE ACCOMMODATIONS COMFORTABLE.
"COMFORTABLE," BATMAN?
AM I SUPPOSED TO REACT LIKE NINOTCHKA?
OH, YES, I HAVE SEEN YOUR AMERICAN MOVIE WITH GARBO AND HER VAST LAUGH CRACKING AWAY THE ICY SOVIET SHELL.
THE KGB PROVIDES ITS AGENTS MANY TRIVIAL COMPENSATIONS.
ODD...THE CIA NEVER SHOWED THAT MOVIE TO ME

BUT IF YOU HOPED I WOULD BE SO IMPRESSED AND SO SEDUCED BY ALL THIS GAUDY MATERIALISM, TO THE POINT OF BETRAYING THE MOTHERLAND AND SALUTING THE STARS AND STRIPES--
OUR TIME WAS AND IS ON A SHORT FUSE, KATIA.
THERE'S AN ELECTRONICS CONVENTION-- GOTHAM'S JAPANESE QUOTIENT HAS EXPLODED-- AND THIS SUITE WAS THE ONLY HOTEL VACANCY IN THE AREA.
THE ONLY LODGINGS NO ONE HAS CLAIMED... AND NOT A HOVEL, BUT PALATIAL LUXURY.
YOURS IS A STRANGE COUNTRY, BATMAN... AND A PITY OUR DARK QUARRY HAS CHOSEN TO END HIS RIDE ON THESE SHORES.
A PITY FROM YOUR PERSPECTIVE, KATIA?
NO-- A PITY ONLY BECAUSE YOU AMERICANS HAVE SO MUCH MORE TO LOSE.
PERHAPS... BUT THE SHIP IS APPROACHING AND OUR SHORES ARE WAITING, SO IF YOU'D CARE TO SLIP INTO A POTATO SACK AND BABUSHKA...
WEST GERMAN AND JAPANESE TEXTILES WILL SUFFICE, BATMAN... AND PERHAPS WE SHOULD HAVE LOST THE WAR.
WE MIGHT HAVE REMAINED ALLIES.
ALL RIGHT-- CUT THE HEADLIGHTS.
AS YOU SAY, DARK RIDER.
NOW THE ENGINE AS WELL...
WE WILL COAST THE REST OF THE WAY, IN SILENCE.

SEVEN MILES AWAY FROM THE RENTAL TRUCK, AT PIER 32...
"FOOTSTEPS ON THE SHIP, KATIA, APPROACHING THE RAMP..."
THAT'S YOUR CUE.
FREEZE, CAPTAIN!
BUT INSTEAD--
HE'S RUNNING IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION, COMMISSIONER --JUST AS THEY ANTICIPATED.
YES--GET READY WITH THE LIGHTS...
"...NOW!"
AGH-H!
DARK RIDER -- AND THE STATUE-- WHERE ARE THEY, CAPTAIN?!
N-NOT HERE... THEY... THEY TOOK THE FREIGHTER'S LAUNCH...LAST NIGHT...
...WHILE WE WERE STILL AT SEA...SO THEY C-COULD REACH PORT AHEAD OF US...

WHAT?!
BUT THE COAST GUARD NET WAS TIGHT ENOUGH TO CATCH A MINNOW.
THIS "DARK RIDER" COULDN'T HAVE SLIPPED THROUGH!
BUT HE DID, COMMISSIONER GORDON, AND THIS MAN MAY KNOW HIS FINAL DESTINATION.
YOUR CITY NOW FACES DISASTER-- OUR NATIONS, POSSIBLE WAR-- AND THE WORLD, POTENTIAL EXTINCTION.
SO. SHALL WE HASTEN TO YOUR INTERROGATION FACILITIES?
ER... AH... OF COURSE, KATIA.
ALL RIGHT-- THIS IS CLOSE ENOUGH.
HOLD IT RIGHT THERE!
SAY NOTHING.
DARK RIDER-- EMERGING FROM THAT DOOR AHEAD...
WHAT'S YOUR BUSINESS HERE?
IT'S ALMOST MIDNIGHT.
WHAT ARE YOU DOING AT THE RESERV--
--UHN!
SKUMP
AFTER YOU GET THE CRATE INTO THE BUILDING--
--PUT HIM IN THE TRUCK.

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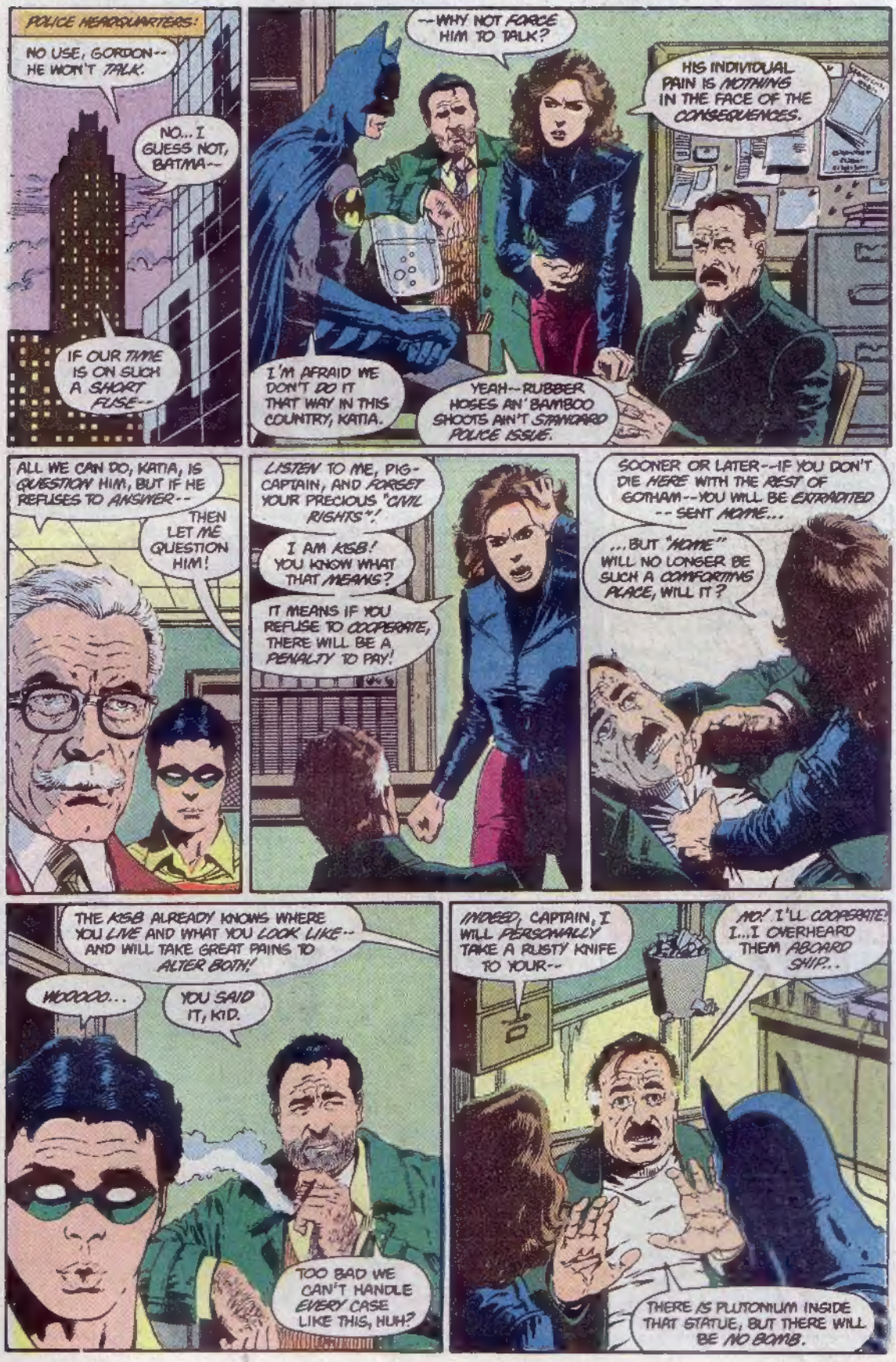
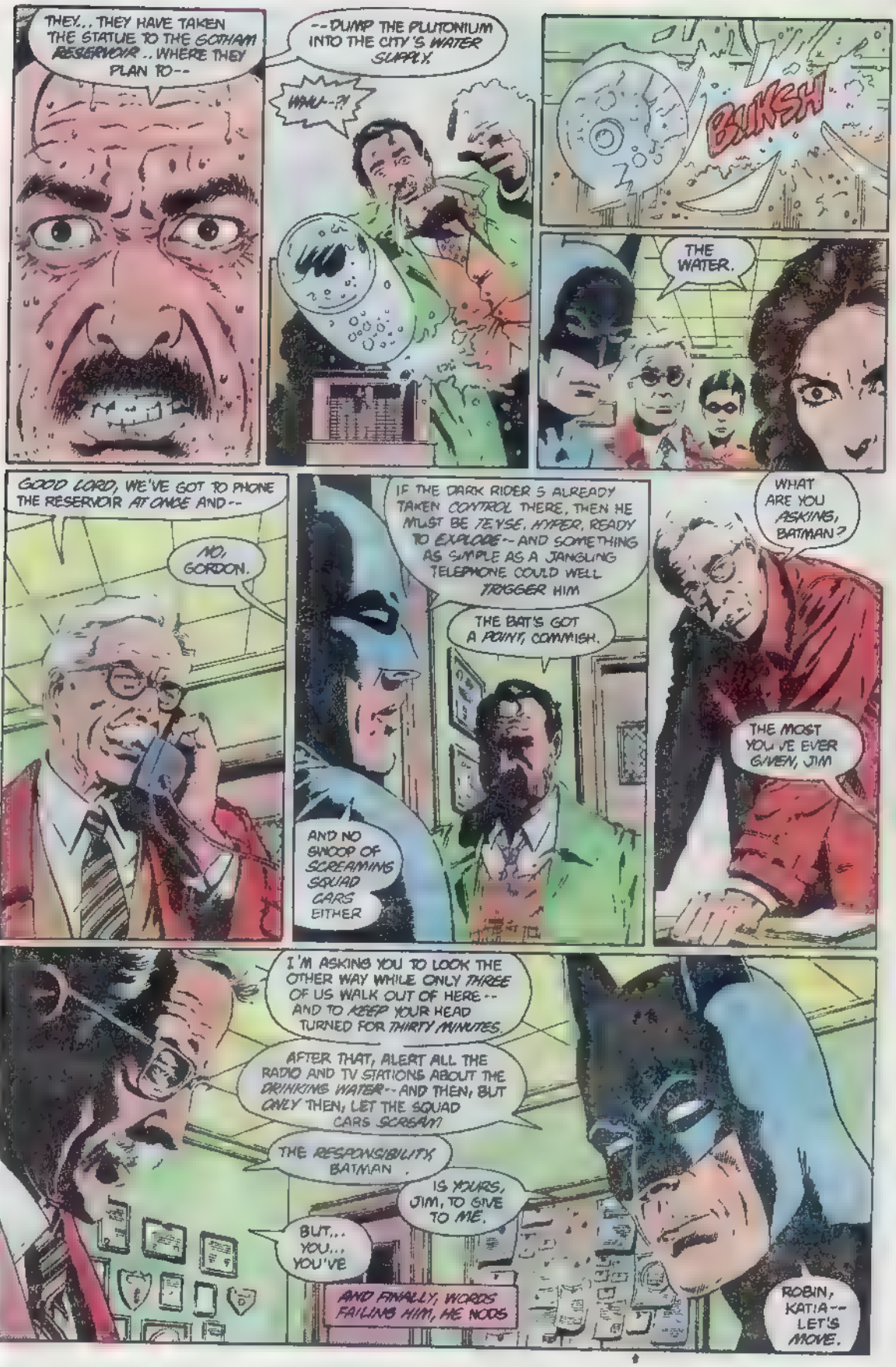
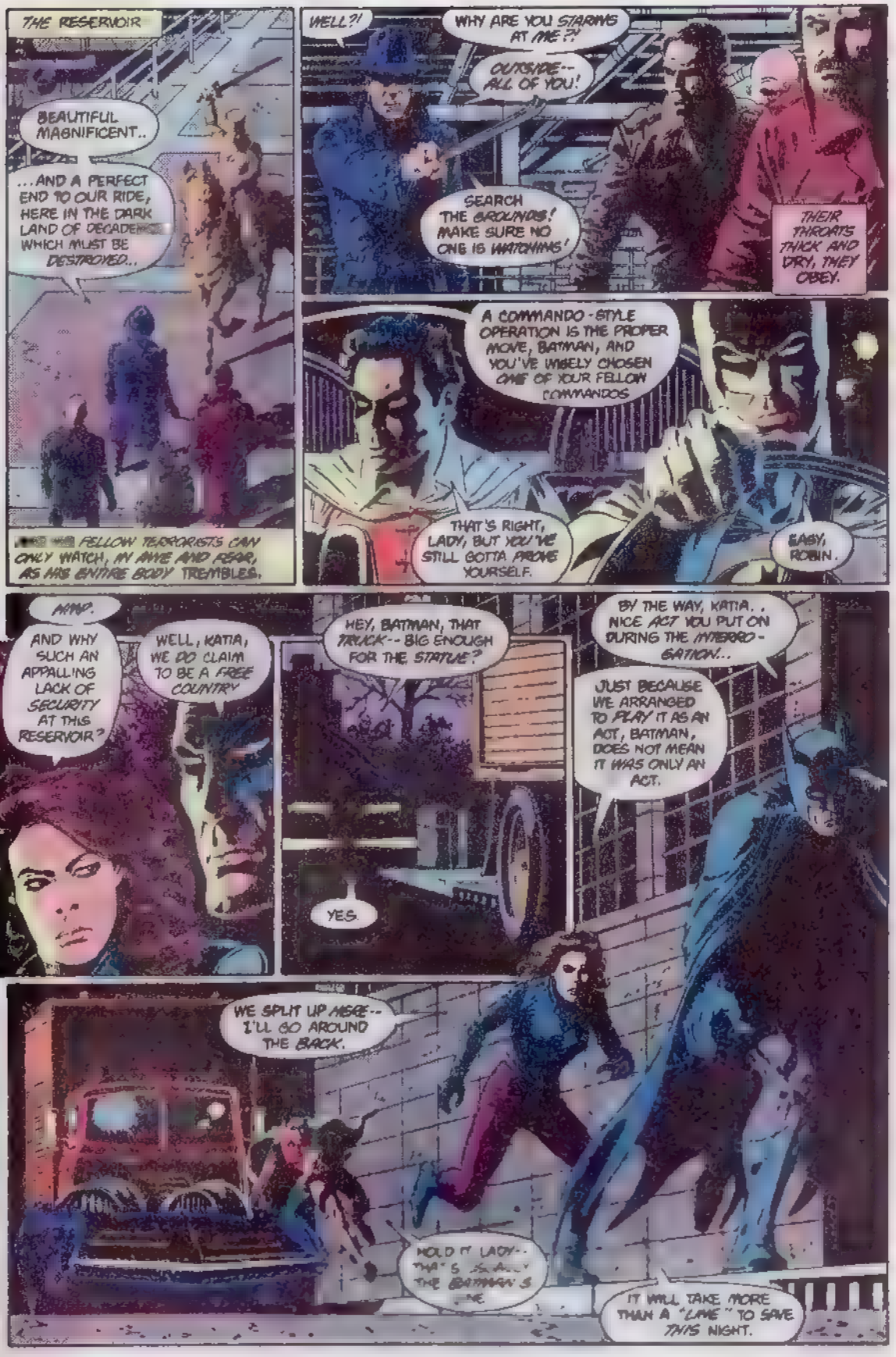
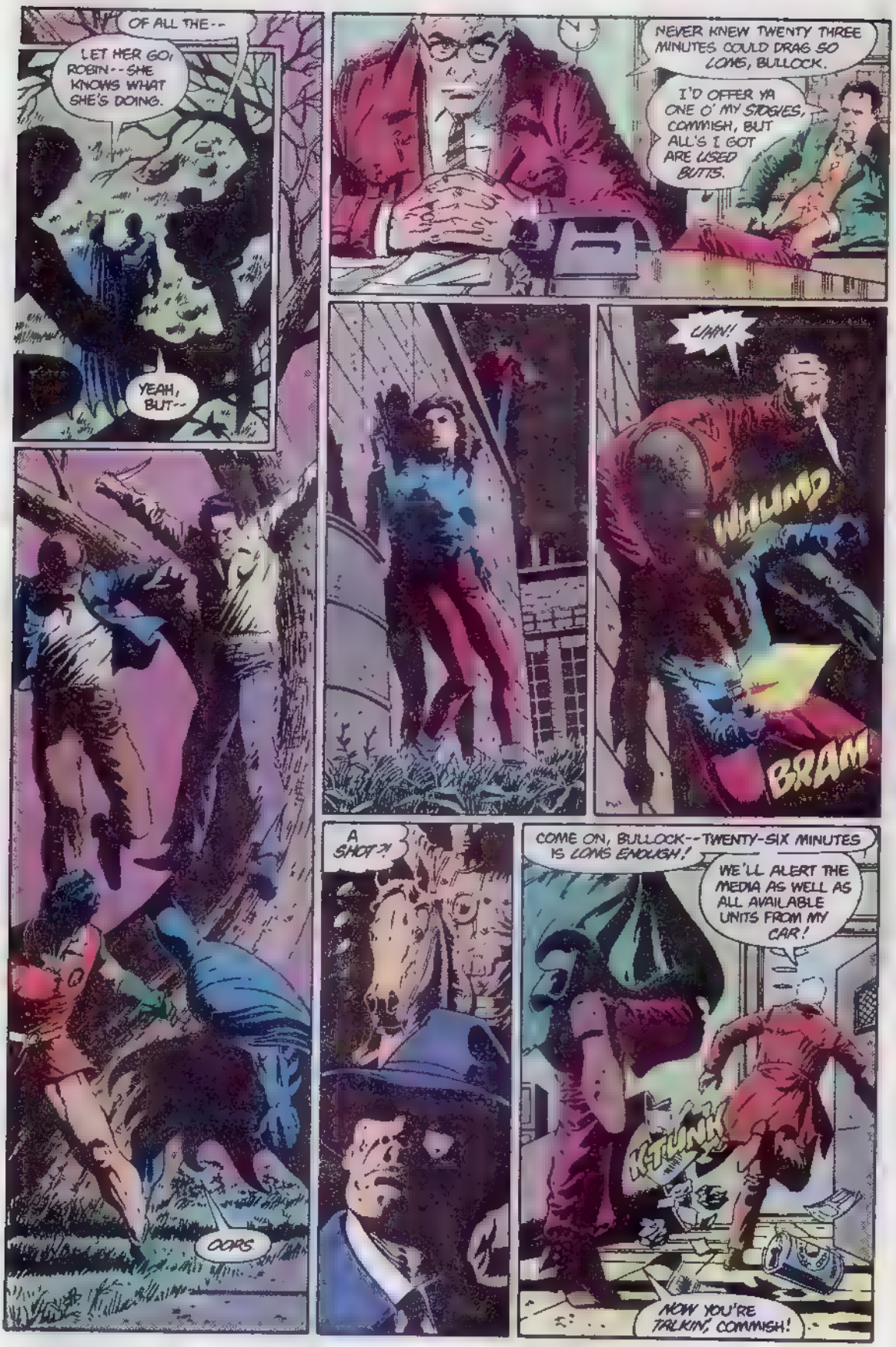

POLICE HEADQUARTERS!
NO USE, GORDON--HE WON'T TALK.
NO... I GUESS NOT, BATMA--
IF OUR TIME IS ON SUCH A SHORT FUSE--
--WHY NOT FORCE HIM TO TALK?
HIS INDIVIDUAL PAIN IS NOTHING IN THE FACE OF THE CONSEQUENCES.
I'M AFRAID WE DON'T DO IT THAT WAY IN THIS COUNTRY, KATIA.
YEAH--RUBBER HOSES AN' BAMBOO SHOOTS AIN'T STANDARD POLICE ISSUE.
ALL WE CAN DO, KATIA, IS QUESTION HIM, BUT IF HE REFUSES TO ANSWER--
THEN LET ME QUESTION HIM!
LISTEN TO ME, PIG-CAPTAIN, AND FORGET YOUR PRECIOUS "CIVIL RIGHTS"!
I AM ASB! YOU KNOW WHAT THAT MEANS?
IT MEANS IF YOU REFUSE TO COOPERATE, THERE WILL BE A PENALTY TO PAY!
SOONER OR LATER--IF YOU DON'T DIE HERE WITH THE REST OF GOTHAM--YOU WILL BE EXTRADITED--SENT HOME...
...BUT "HOME" WILL NO LONGER BE SUCH A COMFORTING PLACE, WILL IT?
THE ASB ALREADY KNOWS WHERE YOU LIVE AND WHAT YOU LOOK LIKE--AND WILL TAKE GREAT PAINS TO ALTER BOTH!
WOOOOO...
YOU SAID IT, KID.
TOO BAD WE CAN'T HANDLE EVERY CASE LIKE THIS, HUH?
INDEED, CAPTAIN, I WILL PERSONALLY TAKE A RUSTY KNIFE TO YOUR--
NO! I'LL COOPERATE! I...I OVERHEARD THEM ABOARD SHIP...
THERE IS PLUTONIUM INSIDE THAT STATUE, BUT THERE WILL BE NO BOMB.


THEY.. THEY HAVE TAKEN THE STATUE TO THE GOTHAM RESERVOIR.. WHERE THEY PLAN TO--
--DUMP THE PLUTONIUM INTO THE CITY'S WATER SUPPLY.
WHAA--?!
BLIKSH
THE WATER.
GOOD LORD, WE'VE GOT TO PHONE THE RESERVOIR AT ONCE AND--
NO, GORDON.
IF THE DARK RIDER S ALREADY TAKEN CONTROL THERE, THEN HE MUST BE ZEYSE, HYPER, READY TO EXPLODE-- AND SOMETHING AS SIMPLE AS A JANGLING TELEPHONE COULD WELL TRIGGER HIM
THE BAT'S GOT A POINT, COMMISH.
AND NO SNOOP OF SCREAMING SQUAD CARS EITHER
WHAT ARE YOU ASKING, BATMAN?
THE MOST YOU'VE EVER GIVEN, JIM
I'M ASKING YOU TO LOOK THE OTHER WAY WHILE ONLY THREE OF US WALK OUT OF HERE-- AND TO KEEP YOUR HEAD TURNED FOR THIRTY MINUTES.
AFTER THAT, ALERT ALL THE RADIO AND TV STATIONS ABOUT THE DRINKING WATER-- AND THEN, BUT ONLY THEN, LET THE SQUAD CARS SCREAM!
THE RESPONSIBILITY, BATMAN,
IS YOURS, JIM, TO GIVE TO ME.
BUT... YOU... YOU'VE
AND FINALLY, WORDS FAILING HIM, HE NODS
ROBIN, KATIA-- LET'S MOVE.


THE RESERVOIR
BEAUTIFUL MAGNIFICENT..
...AND A PERFECT END TO OUR RIDE, HERE IN THE DARK LAND OF DECADENCE WHICH MUST BE DESTROYED..
FELLOW TERRORISTS CAN ONLY WATCH, IN AWE AND FEAR, AS HIS ENTIRE BODY TREMBLES.
WELL?!
WHY ARE YOU STARING AT ME?!
OUTSIDE-- ALL OF YOU!
SEARCH THE GROUNDS! MAKE SURE NO ONE IS WATCHING!
THEIR THROATS THICK AND DRY, THEY OBEY.
A COMMANDO-STYLE OPERATION IS THE PROPER MOVE, BATMAN, AND YOU'VE WISELY CHOSEN ONE OF YOUR FELLOW COMMANDOS
THAT'S RIGHT, LADY, BUT YOU'VE STILL GOTTA PROVE YOURSELF.
EASY, ROBIN.
HMM.
AND WHY SUCH AN APPALLING LACK OF SECURITY AT THIS RESERVOIR?
WELL, KATIA, WE DO CLAIM TO BE A FREE COUNTRY
HEY, BATMAN, THAT TRUCK-- BIG ENOUGH FOR THE STATUE?
YES.
BY THE WAY, KATIA.. NICE ACT YOU PUT ON DURING THE INTERROGATION...
JUST BECAUSE WE ARRANGED TO PLAY IT AS AN ACT, BATMAN, DOES NOT MEAN IT WAS ONLY AN ACT.
WE SPLIT UP HERE-- I'LL GO AROUND THE BACK.
HOLD IT LADY-- THAT'S [illegible] THE BATMAN'S LINE
IT WILL TAKE MORE THAN A "LINE" TO SAVE THIS NIGHT.


OF ALL THE--
LET HER GO, ROBIN--SHE KNOWS WHAT SHE'S DOING.
YEAH, BUT--
NEVER KNEW TWENTY THREE MINUTES COULD DRAG SO LONG, BULLOCK.
I'D OFFER YA ONE O' MY SIDGIES, COMMISH, BUT ALL'S I GOT ARE USED BUTTS.
UHN!
WHUMP
BRAM
OOPS
A SHOT?
COME ON, BULLOCK--TWENTY-SIX MINUTES IS LONG ENOUGH!
WE'LL ALERT THE MEDIA AS WELL AS ALL AVAILABLE UNITS FROM MY CAR!
KTUNK
NOW YOU'RE TALKIN', COMMISH!

KATIA-- SO THEY SENT HER TO TRACK ME ALL THE WAY HERE...!
THOSE FOOLS! OLD MEN DYING ONE AFTER ANOTHER AS SOON AS THEY COME TO POWER!
AND BEFORE THEY DIE, THEY ARE TOO BLIND TO SEE THAT AMERICA IS THE ENEMY-- NOT ME.
IN THE FRONT, TOO-- THE BATMAN DID NOT DIE ON THAT MOUNTAIN...
...AND MY SOLDIERS... ALL OF THEM ARE LOST..
. WHILE THE STATUE IS FAR TOO HEAVY TO MOVE BY MYSELF
YOU SERVED THE WRONG MASTERS, COSSACK. .BUT NONETHELESS I HAVE ALWAYS IDENTIFIED WITH YOU...
.. EVEN ADMIRED YOU...
SWALLOWED DRY, THE AMPHETAMINES ARE BITTER
...YET EVEN IN DEFEAT, I MUST GET THE PLUTONIUM INTO THE WATER-- I MUST!
...AND SO WE SHALL END OUR FINAL AND VERY DARK RIDE TOGETHER... AND AS ONE.
RHNCH
HNOK
FRAK

AGH-H!
BRAM
BWANG
PLUD
PLUD
PLUD
PLUD
PLUD
PLUD

PLIP
HE'S GUTTED THE HORSE...
...RELEASED THE LIQUID PLUTONIUM...
BUT... WHERE IS--
PLUP PLUP PLIP
EEEEE!
KRUNK
STONE!

THE STATUE!
IT'S ONLY THE COSSACK STATUE!
BUT THEN-- ON THE HORSE...!
FRUFFFF
〈 I CANNOT ADMIRE YOU, KATIA... 〉
〈...AND FOR YOUR SIN OF SERVING THE WRONG MASTERS--〉
〈--MAY YOU BE TURNED TO STONE!〉

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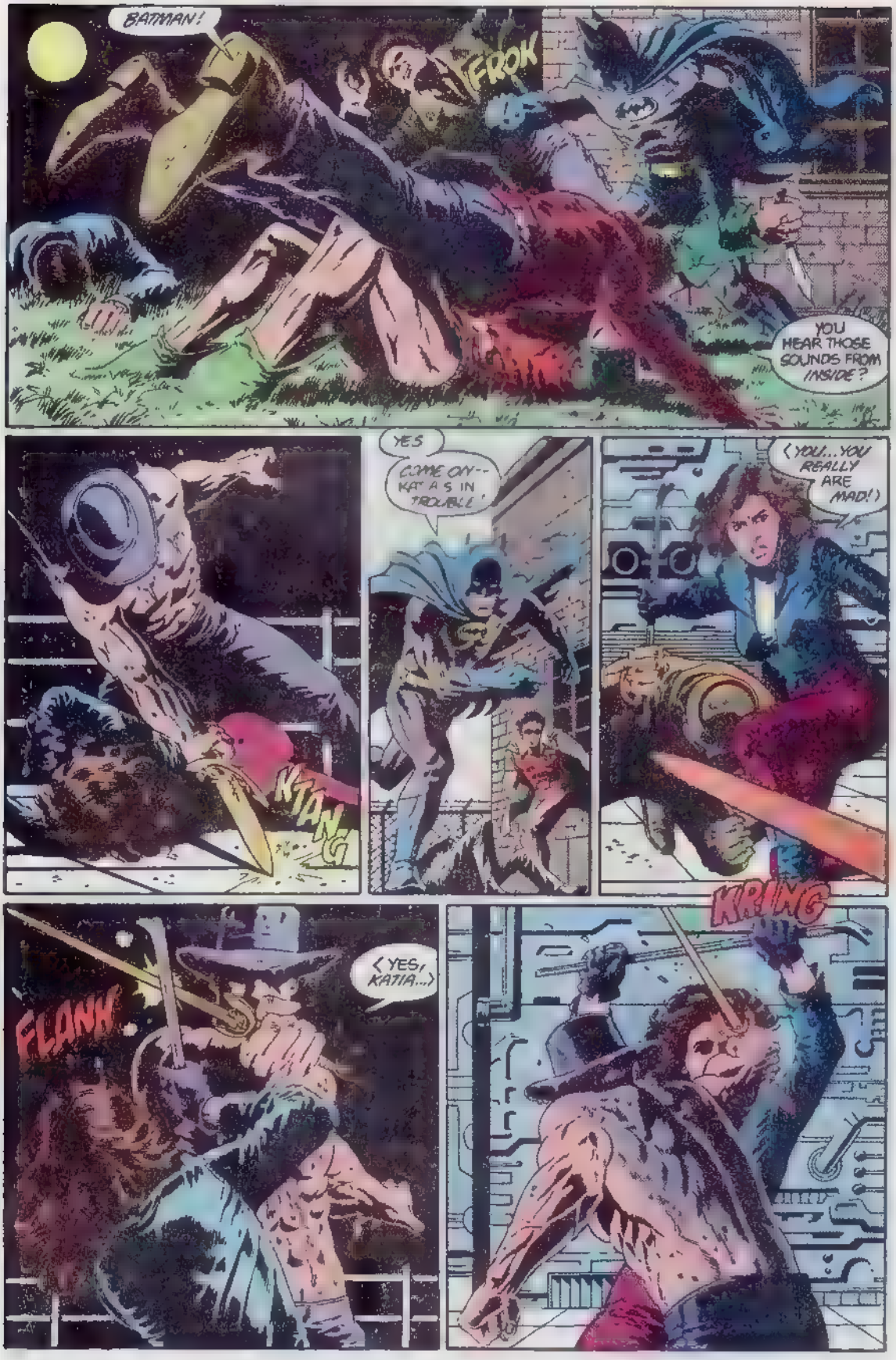
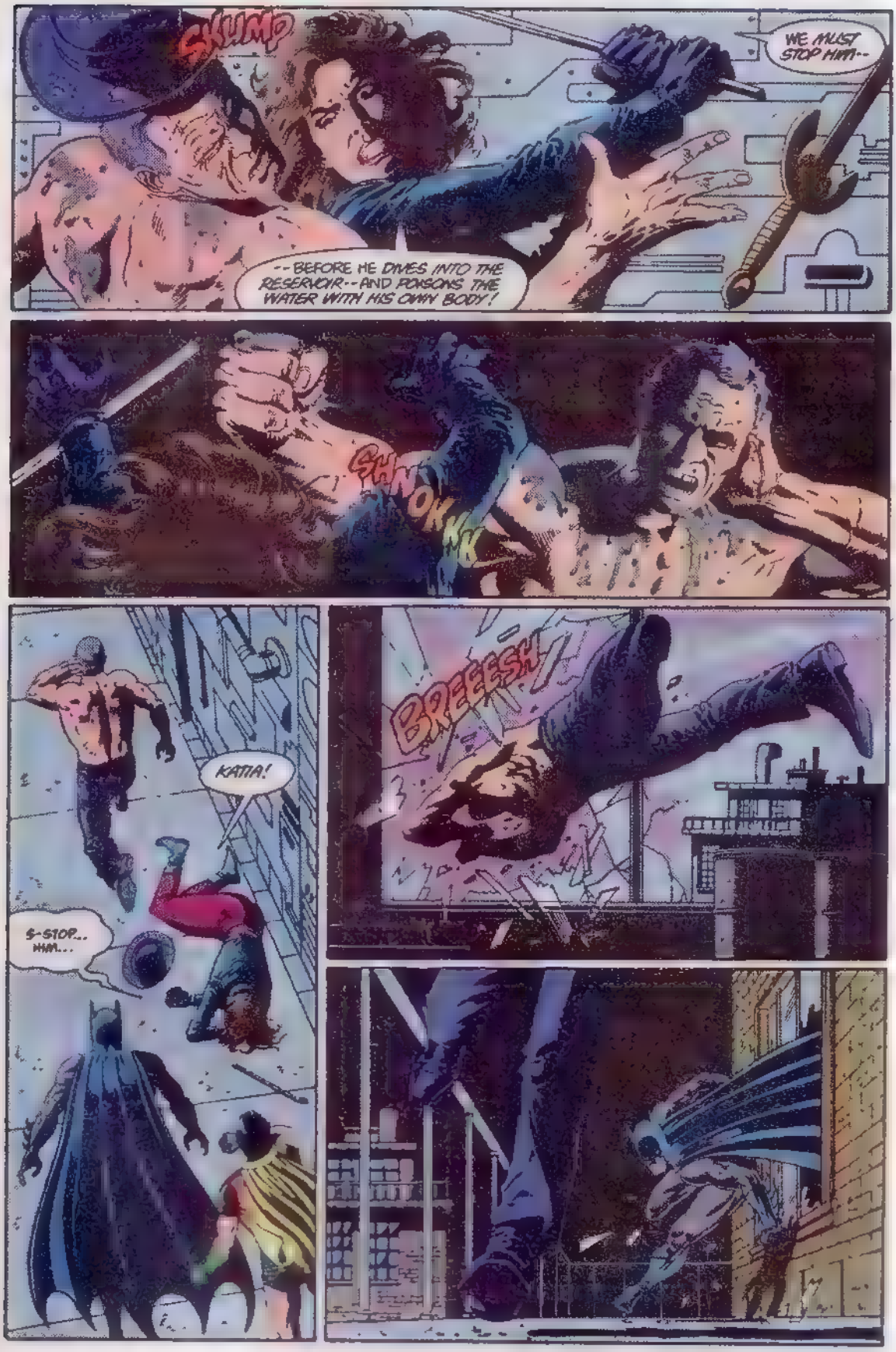

BATMAN!
FROK
YOU HEAR THOSE SOUNDS FROM INSIDE?
KTANG
YES
COME ON-- KAT A S IN TROUBLE
(YOU...YOU REALLY ARE MAD!)
FLANH
(YES, KATIA...)
KRING

CHANK
(I REALLY AM!)
UHN!
(AND MY RIDE--)
SHOOKK
(--HAS REACHED ITS END!)

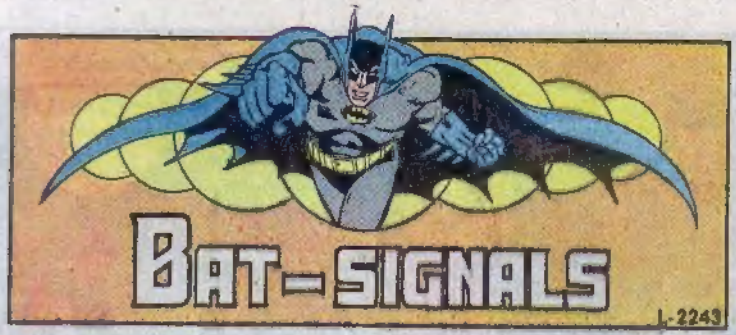
--INTERRUPT WITH THE FOLLOWING EMERGENCY BULLETIN..
CITIZENS ARE ADVISED TO CLOSE ALL WATER TAPS IMMEDIATELY.
HM?
POLICE COMMISSIONER GORDON HAS JUST ANNOUNCED THAT THE CITY'S WATER SUPPLY--
-- MAY BE CONTAMINATED BY A HIGHLY RADIOACTIVE SUBSTANCE...
PHTOOOH
SHRONK
FREEZE!
ALL THAT... GUNK ON HIM...
DROP IT, DARK RIDER.
YOU HAVEN'T A CHANCE.
YOU'RE WRONG, BATMAN-- HE HAS A SUICIDAL CHANCE!
HE IMMERSED HIMSELF IN THE PLUTONIUM!


SKUMP
WE MUST STOP HIM--
--BEFORE HE DIVES INTO THE RESERVOIR--AND POISONS THE WATER WITH HIS OWN BODY!
SHNOKK
KATIA!
S-STOP... HIM...
BREESH

LIKE MANY IN GOTHAM, JULIA PENNYWORTH FINDS QUIET SOLACE IN A NIGHT WITHOUT RADIO OR TELEVISION...
...DRAWS MILD PLEASURE FROM A CUP OF STEAMING TEA...
...WHILE OUTSIDE, THE SQUAD CARS SCREAM--
409
--AND A DARK RIDER MAKES HIS LAST RUN
YOU AIM HIGH!
WE'LL NEVER CATCH HIM, ROBIN!
AND, EVEN AS THE DARK RIDER DIVES--
WHIP

HE'S OVER THE WATER, BATMAN!
PULL!!
FUNCH
AND THE SIREN SCREAMS FADE TO SOFT MOANS...
YOU...YOU STOPPED HIM, BATMAN!
THANK GOD...!
YEAH--NOT ONLY IS THIS STOGIE GIVIN' ME A MEAN THIRST...
...BUT I AIN'T HAD A BATH SINCE LAST SATURDAY NIGHT!
IT SEEMS I WAS WRONG, BATMAN...

THE NIGHT HAS BEEN SAVED... BY YOUR LINE.
THE BATMAN NODS, MORE IN SALUTE THAN AFFIRMATION, AND WITHOUT A SMILE.
MY PEOPLE TRAINED THE DARK RIDER WELL... TOO WELL... AND NOW HE WILL DIE WITHIN THE HOUR WHERE HE LIES... AT THE END OF HIS RIDE, AND SO VERY CLOSE TO HIS GOAL.
HANDLE HIM WITH THICK GLOVES... AND CLEAN THE GROUND UNDER HIM.
HE HAS TOUCHED US ALL TONIGHT, SOME OF US CLOSER THAN OTHERS...
K-K-K-K
... AND NOW THAT IT IS OVER, BATMAN, I CAN CONFESS THAT YOU HAVE ALSO TOUCHED ME.
A PITY WE MUST BE DIVIDED BY PARANOID FOOLS WHO COULD OTHERWISE TOUCH AS WE HAVE... RATHER THAN AS THE DARK RIDER HAS.
WE ALL HAVE SO MUCH TO LOSE.
A DEEP CORD OF THUNDER, AND SHE IS GONE IN A FLURRY OF FIERCE CLICKS.
MEMBERS OF THE FREE PRESS MOVE IN.
WELL, BATMAN, YOU CAN LEAD A HORSE TO WATER, BUT--
NO JOKES, ROBIN.
YEAH... I GUESS IT'S NOT FUNNY.
BUT STATUES ASIDE, BATMAN, AND NOW THAT WE'VE LED HER TO OUR WATER, IT'S A SHAME WE COULDN'T FORCE KATIA TO DRINK...
FORGET IT, GORDON -- AFTER THEY WASH OFF THE RADIATION, SHE'S GOING HOME.
AND, RIDING DARK CLOUDS FROM THE EAST, RAIN THREATENS...



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Dear Doug and Len,

I just received issue #390 of BATMAN in the mail and read it.

Let me say this: if Catwoman dies, I'll drop my subscription and never read another issue of BATMAN or DETECTIVE as long as I live.

Bob G. "Cat" Prat
PO Box 3
Orwell, NY 13426

Bob's letter was typical of the reader reaction to issue #390, but as you all know by now, Catwoman is alive and well and will remain an integral character in this book for at least the next several months.

*****

Dear Len,

BATMAN #390 was the best BATMAN comic book in a decade. Bob, Bill, Denny, Neal, Steve, and Marshall have been joined by Doug and Tom in that exclusive club of inclsive Bat-storytellers. Some kinda stuff!

Ken Rhodes
Corinth, TX

*****

Dear Len and Bob,

Catwoman dead?? It can't be!! Who does Doug Moench think he is?? Marv Wolfman??

I admit that when I saw the cover for BATMAN #390, that I felt it to be either a strong come-on for a near death scene, a scene where someone "dies" but no body is found, or that Nocturna would be the one to go. I admit that the title "Women Dark and Dangerous" did preclude any chance of death meeting up with Vicki Vale or Julia Pennyworth, even if they're semideadwood characters.

I did enjoy the Catwoman's chase of Nocturna. All that leaping, rowing, climbing, and then Nocturna tells her not to bother sneaking up. I assume Robin was the little bird who informed Nocturna of the surprise visitor. One thing, though, that I wish Doug would stop doing is having Bullock tie everything into a movie. It looks too forced and makes Bullock become another one-dimensional character again.

Tom Mandrake, I assume, did *both* pencils and inks, a rarity these days, but both were done well. The art flowed with each panel and page, especially the first three pages.

Sorry to see Selina struck down. Doug is going to have to work his way out of this one, or else face the chance of becoming mouse bait for some fans. I just hope that she becomes a member of that group of people who have survived being hit by lightning.

Hurricane Heeren
15806 Sherman Way #6
Van Nuys, CA 91406

Tom does indeed do both pencilling and inking each month and it seems most readers have approved of his approach—which just warms Mr. Mandrake's heart.

What makes you think Nocturna needed to be told someone was sneaking up on her in the dead of night, her favorite time of day?

*****

Dear Len,

I like the way that the story line is handling the CRISIS: its presence is felt without the signs of a "Crisis crossover" blaring in neon here and there about the book. Batman spent all of this time trying to achieve a physical perfection: I think it is about time that he thought about some much-needed emotional development as well, and perhaps Catwoman's accident will bring it about. It is good that the Night-Slayer is around, though, since Batman really needs someone he can beat up after all this emotional turmoil—funny how it seems natural somehow for a long underwear type to use superheroics as a catharsis.

Roger Z. Cadenhead
Garland, TX

With all the action that has been happening in here, 'TEC, and the CRISIS, Batman has really had little time to do any serious introspection, but Doug plans to have our hero do that in coming stories.

*****

Dear Len and Doug:

For almost 50 years now, comics, especially DC Comics, have given me a great deal of pleasure as well as a great deal to think about. In those three decades, the Batman Family has provided a special stimulus of thought and feeling.

As in real life, I've found myself having to adapt to growth and change in Batman's special world. As in real life, that hasn't always been easy, but it could be toughed out. With BATMAN #390, however, you've finally come up with a development I don't think I can accept.

Please, don't kill Catwoman.

Selina Kyle is a very special person. She's managed to be a realist, and an idealist, a weak and vulnerable human being and the special kind that never gave up, never quit trying, never abandoned hope. Nor has she ever sacrificed her self-respect to any person, thing, or desire.

That kind of integrity isn't common, in either the four-color or workaday worlds. That trait is a very important part of the Catwoman, and an inspiring one.

I don't think I can face Gotham City without the possibility of Selina's vivid presence. Please don't banish me from one of my favorite places—keep Catwoman kicking.

Phetsy Calloway
1036 Marigold Road
Livermore, CA 94550

As stated earlier, Catwoman will remain with this series for a while and there are some interesting plans afoot that will involve her quite dramatically. Keep your eyes open for coming announcements.

*****

Dear Bat-Squad:

Content with the way things have been handled in DETECTIVE COMICS, as well as BATMAN, I thought I'd refrain from writing (you have only yourselves to blame).

First of all, my compliments to artist Tom Mandrake on his work inside BATMAN #390. The Catwoman, as well as Nocturna, was drawn better than I've seen in quite some time. Excellent splash page also.

I refuse to believe that a character like the Catwoman, who has been around almost as long as the Batman, would be dismissed from the D.C. multiverse in such a blasé manner.

So many years of such a fine character zapped away by a bolt of lightning? The life of an exciting character should have an exciting finish to it. These are comics after all. This seems to be the same dull fashion of death that the Batwoman encountered.

So, if the Catwoman is really dead ... bring back the Catwoman.

L.A. Steel
Cleveland, OH

*****

Dear Bat-a-gang,

What can I say about BATMAN #390?

The cover was sensational! Batman and the mysterious woman in blues and black against the red skies of Gotham set the tone for the story within. The splash page was beautiful. I don't like to compare artists with one another, but Don Newton would have been proud of this one. Tom Mandrake has carved his own niche in the saga of Batman.

The story was solid, but a bit hurried and the characters "told" more than they "showed." I suppose not even Doug Moench can write flawless stories all the time. Tom has a real knack for pulling the most out of Doug's plots and I think the two make a dynamic duo of their own.

Batman's emotions are understandably mixed, but lately he seems too wrapped up in his own problems and he is in danger of losing the air of mystery he is famous for. I agree with other letter writers that a good, old-fashioned murder mystery story would be great, and it would reassure us devoted Batfans that Batman is not turning into just "a man." You've shown us his human side long enough; show us now the crimefighter who fights evil in its own element, yet chooses to hide in the darkness himself. After all, how many bats have you seen in the daylight?

One last request: give us another Riddler story soon.

Joe Sarnicola
38 Barber St.
Auburn, NY 13021

*****

Dear Len and Bob,

What are you trying to do, give me heart failure?

BATMAN #390 really surprised/upset me greatly, and to tell you the truth, it altered my perceptions of him forever.

I'd always thought of Batman as a born leader and decision-maker, but after seeing the state of confusion he's in concerning his relationships the last few months, it looks as if Bats is getting wishy-washy, like Charlie Brown.

Also, it really upset me that he protected Nocturne from the Catwoman by slapping Selina around both mentally and physically, and after all this antegonistic activity, he actually had the *nerve* to pick up Selina's smoldering body and cry for her and their "lost love"? Get real! Just last issue he gave her the boot!

Tom's artwork looked much better and his lines much stronger this issue than in any of his previous BATMAN assignments to date. Way to go, Tom!

Elvis Orten
Route #4 Box 120
Somewhere in the United States

*****

Dear Bringers of Bat-Stories,

Today, I received BATMAN #390 in the mail. I was astounded by the cover and quickly looked it over before reading. I was shocked.

Tom Mandrake has done it. His art is just perfect for BATMAN. And he does rain beautifully. The last page was breathtaking! When Mandrake began in issue #386, I thought it was great. Well, four issues later, he's gotten better. Every issue has been an improvement on the last.

Doug Moench has been doing just as well. The last story with this much intensity in script and story idea was #386. In my opinion, this book should be in the *Amazing Heroes* Top 10. John Costanza turned in his usual beautiful work and the same goes for Adrienne Roy.

About the story, is Nocturne any relation to Robin? Let's see some more background into Jason's family.

I vote for mixing one-part stories with multipart stories. For super-villains, multiparters work best and regular criminals can be confined to one-parters, like issue #383 or TEC #552.

As for returning villains, my votes are these: Black Mask, Two-Face, Signal-Man, Clayface III, the Joker, Dr. Tzin-Tzin, and the Riddler. Do not bring back Ra's al Ghūl.

Gary Ballard
528 Hunter's Creek Circle
Madison, MS 39110

Nocturne is no relation to Jason, although, for a brief time, she was his legal guardian (all revealed in a series of stories over the summer of 1984). As for Jason's family, we'll have to wait and see.

We have agreed with the majority and are presenting a pleasing mix of single- and multiple-part tales in both here and TEC. This will continue for the foreseeable future.

Two votes for the Riddler this month, so he's a likely candidate for early return. You were, by the way, the first one to request a speedy return for Black Mask. Clayface III will return in a special story scripted by Alan Moore and illustrated by George Freeman, and as soon as it's scheduled, we'll let you know. Many of the villains requested over the last few months will be returning, and soon. After all, BATMAN #400 is just around the corner.

*****

Dear Bat-People,

I've been a little lazy about letter-writing, but BATMAN #390 pushed me back into motion! #390 took me back to the Batman I like best: the Batman of the early '70s. Ah, those immortal stories of Batman constantly wondering if he could be both a hero *and* a man at the same time. It's very true that Bruce Wayne is the Batman, but the Batman is not Bruce Wayne ... this is an important fact that Bat-fans would do well to remember.

In our lives, we each have to face barriers and ask ourselves disturbing questions we wish we could never have to ask. Batman is going through these problems and is reacting in a very human way—the way a *man* would—not the way a creature of the night or an avenging angel would. We are seeing what is in the mind of the man who wears the mask of darkness, fear, and anger.

Doug, you're handling the complexities of the Batman better than any writer I can remember. I enjoy each new story more and more (the Black Mask saga was great!).

The artwork of Tom Mandrake is getting better all the time. I enjoyed his work on SPANNER'S GLAXY, but there it was brighter and less angular. Now, with BATMAN, he's brought a new style to the book, a darker, almost brooding look to the pages. It fits the title very well. .

Mike Griffith
118 S. Broadway
Wind Gap, PA

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COMING ATTRACTIONS

In two weeks, DETECTIVE #561 brings us another single-part tale by Doug and Gene Colan. Back here next month, Tom returns and brings the Film Freak with him. It's the beginning of a new three-parter that will rock Gotham City.

SHADOW OF THE BATMAN #5 is also out this month, concluding the classic reprints with the two-part Clayface III story written by Len and illustrated by Marshall Rogers and Dick Giordano.

Until we meet again, keep writing and as always, keep smiling!

—Bob Greenberger

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11. I certify that the statements made by me above are correct and complete. Paul Levitz, Exec.-Vice President-Operations